2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

619 over who is a Badaga and who is not.

The coherence of Badaga society was already a *fait accompli* by
175 1800, and we know of scarcely any villages founded much after that date. In effect their colonization of the Nilgiris and the consolidation of various refugee groups into a unity were events of what we must academically call prehistory. From the Badagas' point of view, however, the advent of a few foreign literati did not nudge their community from the darkness of prehistory into the gloomy light of historicity. Until today nobody, Badaga or otherwise, has published a history of the community: are they therefore still prehistoric?

814 Be that as it may, their past is of extreme importance to them, and is still vividly recalled in an oral history of legends that are taken for fact and in most cases probably *are* based on actual
184 events. Badaga legends are highly consistent from one part of the district to another and are sufficiently precise about the more insignificant details to convince me that, like the Maori genealogists of old, Badagas have long maintained a fairly accurate
538 interest in their past and in teaching the young about it. Some of these unwritten legends take the form of epic ballads that are sung throughout the night while waiting for someone to die and in other situations where time has to be killed. This should not deceive us into considering the legends mere entertainment: it is true that they are delightfully entertaining to Badagas, but legends are also crucial to their convictions about how the social system
160 should operate. It is these highly credible tales about who settled which village that explain to all the 120,000 Badagas the regulations governing village exogamy and other aspects of the relation between a kinship system, a pattern of settlement and a social hierarchy.

121 Instead of relegating Badaga legend to the 'folklore' pigeon-hole in the hope that a content analysis will later be made of it, I
538 propose to examine briefly what the legends do and do not cover in Badaga prehistory. Most of them are tales of supposed events, often mysterious, often tragic, events in the lives of personages who lived on the Nilgiri Hills. Stories of love and magic belong to this group. A second group are the political tales, legends of chieftains and East India Company officials who came to the hills for conquest, plunder or sport. A third group are the local legends of Badaga colonization. These three groups deal with varying aspects of Badaga origins. The tales of personal exploits, often amorous in